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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 1729

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: OREP, VN, CB

SUBJECT: ~~CONFIDENTIALITY VISIT TO VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA~~

1. (CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT)

2. DURING A 3-DAY VISIT TO VIETNAM DECEMBER 9-11, CODEL MET WITH VICE FOREIGN MINISTER PHAN DOAN NAM AND FOREIGN MINISTER NGUYEN CO THACH AND PAID A CALL ON PREMIER PHAM VAN DONG. THEY ALSO MET NATIONAL ASSEMBLY VICE CHAIRMAN PHAN ANH AT A BANQUET HOSTED BY VFM NAM.

3. IN THEIR DISCUSSIONS, REPRESENTATIVE MONTGOMERY AND HIS COLLEAGUES CONCENTRATED ON FOUR AREAS OF INTEREST: MIAS, AGENT ORANGE, AMERASIAN CHILDREN, AND REEDUCATION CAMP INMATES. LITTLE INFORMATION WAS OBTAINED ON THE AGENT ORANGE PROBLEM BEYOND THE STATEMENT THAT THE VIETNAMESE WERE PLANNING A FURTHER INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE SUBJECT NEXT YEAR. ON MIAS, VIETNAMESE STRESSED HOW MUCH THEY HAD DONE ALREADY AND PROMISED TO CONTINUE THEIR EFFORTS, BUT THEY ALSO STRESSED THE DIFFICULTY AND EXPENSE OF MAKING FURTHER PROGRESS. THEY MENTIONED THE NEED FOR HELICOPTERS AND BULLDOZERS, WHICH THEY SAID WAS BEING DISCUSSED IN JCRC CHANNELS.

4. DISCUSSION ON AMERASIANS WAS RELATIVELY NON-CONTENTIOUS. ALTHOUGH THE VIETNAMESE REPEATEDLY COMPLAINED THAT THE PACE OF "REPATRIATION" WAS MUCH TOO SLOW. IN HO CHI MINH CITY, THE CODEL WAS GIVEN THE ESTIMATE OF A TOTAL OF 15,000 AMERASIAN CHILDREN, OR 45,000 INCLUDING FAMILY MEMBERS. SRV OFFICIALS SAID THEY WERE WORKING ON A SECOND LIST TO SUPPLEMENT THE ONE HANDED OVER IN NOVEMBER.

5. THE CODEL'S REQUEST TO VISIT A REEDUCATION CAMP WAS NOT GRANTED. THE VIETNAMESE IN THEIR DISCUSSIONS STRESSED THEIR FEAR THAT THE "HARD CORE" GVN OFFICIALS NOW IN THE CAMPS, IF RELEASED, COULD BE USED AGAINST THEM BY AN UNFRIENDLY U.S. THEY CITED SEVERAL INCIDENTS IN THE U.S. IN SUPPORT OF THIS CONTENTION. (IN THIS CONNECTION, FOREIGN JOURNALISTS HAVE BEEN INVITED TO HO CHI MINH CITY TO COVER A SUBVERSION SHOW TRAIL WHICH WILL REPORTEDLY INCLUDE ACTIVITIES BY U.S.- BASED REFUGEES.) THE SRV OFFICIALS GAVE NO PRECISE FIGURES FOR CAMP INMATES, SAYING ONLY THAT LESS THAN ONE PERCENT

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OF THE 1.5 MILLION ARVN SOLDIERS WERE STILL IN CAMPS. THEY DID NOT RESPOND TO CODEL'S REQUEST FOR A LIST, NOR TO THE SUGGESTION THAT THE SRV RELEASE A SMALL GROUP TO THE U.S. ON A TRAIL BASIS, AS A FIRST STEP TOWARD A COMPLETE RELEASE.

6. REPRESENTATIVE MONTGOMERY ASKED FOR WILLIAM MATHERS' RELEASE AND OFFERED TO TAKE HIM ON THE CODEL PLANE. THE VIETNAMESE PROVIDED NO REAL INFORMATION ON THE CASE. THACH STATED THAT HE CONSIDERED THE CASE TO BE A MINOR PROBLEM BUT

THAT HE WOULD LOOK INTO IT. THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN HANOI TOLD THE DELEGATION THAT HE HAD RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS FROM PARIS TO MAKE A DEMARCHE ON MATHERS DECEMBER 11. (PRESUME DEPARTMENT ALREADY INFORMED). IN HO CHI MINH CITY, A VVA GROUP TOLD THE DELEGATION THAT THEY HAD BEEN IN CAN THO DECEMBER 11, AND ASKED ABOUT MATHERS. THEY WERE TOLD THERE THAT THE INVESTIGATION WAS NOT YET COMPLETE.

7. THE VIETNAMESE USED DISCUSSION OF ALL THESE SUBJECTS TO COMPLAIN ABOUT THE LACK OF PROGRESS TOWARD NORMALIZATION. DISCUSSION OF INCREASING CONTACTS BETWEEN AMERICANS AND VIETNAMESE, INCLUDING VISITS TO THE UNITED STATES BY SRV OFFICIALS, LED TO VIETNAMESE COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE 25-MILE LIMIT PLACED ON THEIR UN MISSION IN NEW YORK WHICH PREVENTED THEM FROM ACCEPTING INVITATIONS TO WASHINGTON. THE RESTRICTION WAS ALSO MENTIONED IN CONNECTION WITH THE CODEL'S REQUEST FOR A REEDUCATION CAMP VISIT. REPRESENTATIVE MONTGOMERY INDICATED HE WAS UNHAPPY WITH THE RESTRICTION AND WOULD LOOK INTO IT.

8. THACH SPOKE TO THE CODEL ABOUT CAMBODIA, PREDICTABLY BLAMING THE SITUATION ON POL POT AND THE CHINESE. HE STATED THAT VIETNAM WOULD BE HAPPY TO WITHDRAW ITS TROOPS IF POL POT WERE ELIMINATED AND PEACE SECURED BY A REGIONAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN ASEAN AND THE COUNTRIES OF INDOCHINA. THE UNITED STATES HAD A ROLE TO PLAY IN THE REGION, AND VIETNAM DID NOT OPPOSE ITS BASES IN THE PHILIPPINES, SO LONG AS THEY WERE NOT USED AGAINST VIETNAM. BUT THE UNITED STATES SHOULD NOT LET ITSELF BE USED BY CHINA.

9. THE HALF-HOUR MEETING WITH PHAM VAN DONG WAS LARGELY RESTRICTED TO GENERALITIES, ALTHOUGH REPRESENTATIVE MONTGOMERY TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF RESOLVING THE MIA ISSUE. BOTH DONG AND THE CODEL EXPRESSED THE HOPE FOR A RAPID RESOLUTION OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES AND FOR NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS.

10. IN THEIR ONE-DAY VISIT TO PHNOM PENH, THE CODEL MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER HUN SEN, WHO GAVE THEN A ONE AND ONE HALF HOUR LECTURE DENOUNCING THE UNITED STATES POLICY OF SUPPORTING POL POT. THE CODEL ALSO VISITED TOUL SLENG PRISON AND A BURIAL GROUND FOR MASSACRE VICTIMS. AT DINNER THEY MET PHLEK PHIRUN (F), PRESIDENT OF THE KAMPUCHEAN RED CROSS AND A MEMBER OF THE KAMPUCHEAN PARLIAMENT.

11. CODEL MEMBERS LEFT PHNOM PENH CONCERNED ABOUT U.S. POLICIES ON THE CAMBODIAN QUESTION. REPRESENTATIVE MONTGOMERY HAS ASKED TO MEET WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY WOLFOWITZ OR OTHER DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS THIS QUESTION UPON HIS RETURN, PREFERABLY IN THE PERIOD DECEMBER 19-21.

12. CODEL PLANS A PRESS RELEASE UPON ITS RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES. DEPARTMENT AND OTHER ADDRESSEES SHOULD NOT MAKE DETAILS OF THE TRIP PUBLIC BEFORE THAT TIME, OTHER THAN TO CONFIRM IF ASKED THE ITINERARY AND THE IDENTITY OF THE CODEL'S INTERLOCUTORS.

13. REPRESENTATIVE MONTGOMERY HAS SEEN THIS MESSAGE IN DRAFT.

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